



October 24, 2023

Subject: Akron Public School Board Race

It should come as no surprise to hear that workforce development continues to be a top concern for employers, as difficulties with finding and keeping skilled workers in the Greater Akron community continue to mount. For many, it seems there are more jobs and fewer workers. The pandemic aggravated this already strained talent pipeline and inflation has made it harder to create jobs or offer better pay at a time when worker sentiment is shifting and wage demands are growing.

As our region continues to focus on effective ways to attract, train, and retain skilled workers for in-demand jobs, we must ensure that our educational institutions are positioning our future workforce for success. Thanks to long term vision and planning, some of this proactive work to prop up the talent pipeline in Greater Akron is already being done within the school system. As the largest driver of K-12 education in Greater Akron, Akron Public Schools is vitally important to our broader workforce development ecosystem and economy. It is imperative that our students not only receive a quality education, but understand and prepare for the opportunities that await them after graduation. To do this important work, our community relies on the College and Career Academies of Akron (CCAA).

Since the CCAA's launch in 2017, Akron Public Schools has seen improvements in graduation rates, academic achievement, the development of real-world skills, and the number of students graduating with industry certifications and college credits. In key partnership with CCAA, the United Way of Summit & Medina serves as the connector organization between APS and our local corporations, matching companies with career pathways embedded in schools. As a proven model for effectively providing experiential learning opportunities and exposure to a variety of careers and skills training programs, elected leaders and our larger community must prioritize the work of the CCAA and position it for success.

As Akronites prepare to elect new APS School Board members, the Greater Akron Chamber and United Way of Summit and Medina talked with each of the candidates to better understand their motivations, priorities, and perspectives as it relates to the continued growth and success of our region's largest K-12 institution. We feel strongly that the efficacy and stability of the APS School Board will have significant implications on our broader workforce ecosystem and regional economy. While neither organization will endorse any of the candidates, we are ensuring that the voice of the business community is heard and that you have the information you need to make an informed decision at the ballot box.

As you review the resources being made available to you, we encourage you to reflect upon recent events and seek out candidates who best align with your expectations for the Board and how it should interact with administrators, students, and external partners. The vitality of our region's business community depends on it.

Steve Millard, President and CEO
Greater Akron Chamber

Jim Mullen, President and CEO
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